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Section 17

Measurement and Control Circuits

FRANCIS T. THOMPSON *General Manager, Engineering Technology Division, Research and Development Center, Westinghouse Electric Corporation; Fellow, IEEE; Senior Member, Instrument Society of America*

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Principles of Measurement Circuits*

DEFINITIONS AND PRINCIPLES OF MEASUREMENT

1. Precision is a measure of the spread of repeated determinations of a particular quantity. Precision depends on the resolution of the measurement means and variations in the measured

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value caused by instabilities in the measurement system. A measurement system may give precise readings, all of which are inaccurate because of an error in calibration or a defect in the system.

2. **Accuracy** is a statement of the limits which bound the departure of a measured value from the true value. Accuracy includes the imprecision of the measurement along with all the accumulated errors in the measurement chain extending from the basic reference standards to the measurement in question.

3. **Errors** may be classified into two categories, systematic and random. *Systematic errors* are those which consistently recur when a number of measurements are taken. Systematic errors may be caused by deterioration of the measurement system (weakened magnetic field, change in reference resistance value), alteration of the measured value by the addition or extraction of energy from the element being measured, response-time effects, and attenuation or distortion of the measurement signal. *Random errors* are accidental, tend to follow the laws of chance, and do not exhibit a consistent magnitude or sign. Noise and environmental factors normally produce random errors but may also contribute to systematic errors.

TABLE 17-1 Factors for Establishing Confidence Interval*

Number of observations	Confidence level			
	0.50	0.90	0.95	0.99
	Confidence interval			
2	$X \pm 1.00s$	$X \pm 6.31s$	$X \pm 12.71s$	$X \pm 63.66s$
3	$X \pm 0.82s$	$X \pm 2.92s$	$X \pm 4.30s$	$X \pm 9.92s$
4	$X \pm 0.77s$	$X \pm 2.35s$	$X \pm 3.18s$	$X \pm 6.84s$
5	$X \pm 0.74s$	$X \pm 2.13s$	$X \pm 2.78s$	$X \pm 5.40s$
6	$X \pm 0.73s$	$X \pm 2.02s$	$X \pm 2.57s$	$X \pm 4.08s$
7	$X \pm 0.72s$	$X \pm 1.94s$	$X \pm 2.45s$	$X \pm 3.71s$
8	$X \pm 0.71s$	$X \pm 1.90s$	$X \pm 2.37s$	$X \pm 3.50s$
9	$X \pm 0.71s$	$X \pm 1.86s$	$X \pm 2.31s$	$X \pm 3.36s$
10	$X \pm 0.70s$	$X \pm 1.83s$	$X \pm 2.26s$	$X \pm 3.28s$
11	$X \pm 0.70s$	$X \pm 1.81s$	$X \pm 2.23s$	$X \pm 3.17s$
16	$X \pm 0.69s$	$X \pm 1.75s$	$X \pm 2.13s$	$X \pm 2.95s$
∞	$X \pm 0.67s$	$X \pm 1.64s$	$X \pm 1.96s$	$X \pm 2.58s$

* Modified and abridged from Table IV of R. A. Fisher and F. Yates, "Statistical Tables for Biological, Agricultural, and Medical Research," Oliver & Boyd, Edinburgh, 1963. By permission of the authors and publishers.

The arithmetic average of a number of observations should be used to minimize the effect of random errors. The arithmetic average or mean \bar{X} of a set of n readings X_1, X_2, \dots, X_n is

$$\bar{X} = \Sigma X_i / n$$

The dispersion of these readings about the mean is generally described in terms of the standard deviation σ , which can be estimated for n observations by

$$s = \sqrt{\frac{\Sigma (X_i - \bar{X})^2}{n - 1}}$$

where s approaches σ as n becomes large.

A *confidence interval* can be determined within which a specified fraction of all observed values may be expected to lie. The *confidence level* is the probability of a randomly selected reading falling within this interval. Confidence intervals are given in Table 17-1 as a function of the number of observations and the required confidence level. Detailed information on measurement errors is given in Ref. 1, Par. 17-160.

4. **Standardization and calibration** involve the comparison of a physical measurement with a reference standard. Calibration normally refers to the determination of the accuracy and linearity of a measuring system at a number of points, while standardization involves the adjustment of a parameter of the measurement system so that the reading at one specific value corresponds with a reference standard. The numerical value of any reference standard should be capable of being traced through a chain of measurements to a National Reference Standard maintained by the National Bureau of Standards.

The range of a measurement system refers to the range of values which the system is designed to provide satisfactory measurements. A measurement should be chosen so that the reading is within 2% at half scale.

The resolution of a measuring system is defined as the smallest quantity which can be distinguished. The resolution of a system is proportional to the square root of the input. Instruments having a square-law scale as linear-scale instruments. Amplification of the signal in the region of interest and thereby increasing the resolution is limited by the magnitude of the signal to be measured.

Noise may be defined as any signal which does not contribute to the measurement. Noise is introduced in measurement systems by mechanical coupling of external noise can be reduced by electromagnetic shielding. Electrical noise is often introduced by harmonics, as well as at radio frequencies.

In systems containing amplification, the noise introduced by the noise components within the amplifier must be considered. The noise in the output determines the lower limit of the signal. Even if external noise is minimized by shielding, fluctuations in the quantity being measured cause motion in mechanical systems, Johnson noise in electrical systems, and thermal noise in electronic elements. Johnson noise is generated by the thermal agitation of electrons in a conductor. The equivalent rms noise voltage developed across a resistor R is equal to $\sqrt{4kTR\Delta f}$, where k is Boltzmann's constant, T is the absolute temperature, and Δf is the bandwidth in hertz over which the noise is observed.

8. The *bandwidth* Δf of a system is the difference between the highest and lowest frequencies passed by the system (see Par. 17-44). The bandwidth of a system is the range of frequencies over which the system follows variations in the quantity being measured. The lower limit of the response time is approximately equal to $1/(3\Delta f)$. A longer response time, it makes the system more susceptible to noise.

9. **Environmental factors** which influence the accuracy of a measurement include temperature, humidity, magnetic and electrostatic fields, vibration, and position. Temperature changes can alter the voltage of thermally generated emfs, cause variations in the dielectric properties of matter. Humidity affects the resistance of organic materials. DC magnetic and electrostatic fields which are sensitive to these fields, while ac fields can interfere with the stability of the system in the form of shock or vibration. If severe enough, can result in permanent damage to the measurements because of the influence of magnetic, electric, and mechanical factors.

TRANSDUCERS, INSTRUMENTS, AND INDICATORS

10. **Transducers** are used to respond to the state of a system and convert it into a convenient electrical or mechanical quantity according to the variable to be measured. Variable classification is based on the physical, chemical, nuclear-radiation, electromagnetic, and mechanical nature of the variable. Detailed information is given in Sec. 10.

11. **Instruments** can be classified according to whether they are analog or digital. Analog instruments include the d'Arsonval (moving-coil) instrument, electrostatic voltmeter, galvanometer, oscilloscope, and potentiometric recorders. Digital instruments include the digital voltmeter, digital oscilloscope, and digital potentiometer. They have the advantage of rapid and accurate readings.

12. **Indicators** are used to communicate output information to the observer.